



# **HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Keep Hearth and Home Safe This Holiday Season**

*Cooking Is the Number 1 Cause of Residential Fires*

Several families fled their homes this morning due to a fire that roared through a southwest Houston apartment complex. The fire may have started in a kitchen. Arson investigators are examining the premises.

HFD urges citizens to observe this safety message. Cooking is the number 1 cause of residential fires and unattended cooking is the primary cause of kitchen fires. Most cooking equipment fires start with the ignition of common household items including food or grease, cabinets, wall coverings, paper or plastic bags , and curtains. Never leave cooking food unattended on the stovetop.

If you have to leave, turn off burners or set a timer if you leave the room for any reason. Turn pot handles away from the front of the stove and never position them over another burner. Make sure pot holders are not too close to the stove.

Never use a wet oven mitt, as it presents a scald danger if the moisture in the mitt is heated. Wear short sleeves or tight-fitting long sleeves. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire. Shield yourself from scalding steam when lifting lids from hot pots.

Keep broilers, ovens, stove tops and exhaust ducts free from grease. If there is a fire in the oven, turn off the oven and keep the oven door closed. Never pour water on a grease fire and never discharge a fire extinguisher onto a pan fire, as it can spray or shoot burning grease around the kitchen, actually spreading the fire. Use an ABC fire extinguisher, baking soda or a tight-fitting pot lid, never flour or water, to extinguish a kitchen fire. Portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives; but portable extinguishers have limitations. Because fire grows and spreads so rapidly, the number one priority is to get out safely. For more HFD safety information go to: [www.houstonfire.org](http://www.houstonfire.org) References: The United States Fire Administration (USFA) <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/index.shtm>; National Fire Protection <http://www.nfpa.org/>